

ADDRESS

TO THE

FREE COLORED PEOPLE

OF THE

UNITED STATES.

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ADDRESS.

DEAR FRIENDS:—The deep interest we feel in your welfare, leads us to address you, and we do it with perfect confidence that you will consider our sincere friendship a sufficient apology for any advice we may offer.

In the sight of God, and in our own estimation, we have no superiority over you. We are all children of one Father, who has endowed us with equal capabilities for usefulness, improvement, and happiness; but the customs of society, founded in violence, and perpetuated by pride, operate generally to deprive you of full and free opportunities to develop your moral and intellectual gifts. For these reasons, you have always needed advice and encouragement; and the present is in many respects, a season of peculiar trial.

In appealing to the consciences of white men concerning their long neglected duties toward an oppressed race, philanthropists have unavoidably taught you a better appreciation of your own rights and responsibilities. The mere fact that so many eyes are fixed upon you, and so many hearts interested in your

respectability and improvement, has roused your latent energies, and given powerful motives for exertion; but it has, at the same time, made you more painfully aware of the formidable obstacles in your path.

The barbarous spirit indicated by taking from you the right of suffrage, in a state calling itself enlightened and republican, a state to whose wealth and respectability you contribute in common with other citizens, cannot but excite feelings of indignation; though you have wisely kept such feelings under the restraint of law and decorum. We can only express our cordial sympathy, and exhort you to be patient, forgiving, brave, and true.

Within a few years, decided improvement has become visible among you. Parents are more careful to form neat and orderly habits in their children, and the desire for education has greatly increased. In the next generation, we trust it will be a very rare thing to find a colored person in the free states, who does not know how to read, write and cipher; and this circumstance alone will do a vast deal toward the removal of existing prejudice.

However zealously the abolitionists may preach, even if all of them consistently practise what they preach, they cannot do one hundredth part so much for you as you can do for yourselves. Your sobriety, decorum, industry, neat appearance, and desire for

improvement, will furnish them with the most triumphant refutation of the charges brought against you by the oppressors and slanderers of your race. When enemies sneer contemptuously, you can enable them to reply, with the irresistible power of truth, "Look at their churches, their schools, their Temperance Societies, their Moral Reform Societies, their virtuous habits, their well-informed minds, their cultivated farms, their intelligent and orderly manner of transacting business! Such a people cannot be trampled under foot! Such a people cannot be despised!"

In view of your efforts, particularly of late years, we find much to excite our respect and to make us thankful. Considering the numerous and discouraging obstacles with which you have to contend, your progress has been truly surprising; but you have yet a great work to perform—a work requiring no ordinary degree of moral strength and courage.

Those among you who are now striving to rise into the full spiritual stature of men and women, must expect and consent to be in a great measure martyrs to the good of coming generations; for you must inevitably stand in an embarrassing situation between the jealous ignorance of many of your own class, and the haughty neglect of white people. But be not discouraged. If you can perform this task from a sincere desire to elevate the condition of your down-

trodden and degraded race, unalloyed with selfish pride of superiority, the effort will be doubly blessed to yourselves and others.

We beseech you not to impede your own progress by speaking ill of each other. When so many are combined to depress you, it is peculiarly a duty to uphold and assist each other, as far as you can do so, without a violation of truth or of some other duty. Instead of being jealous of superior acquirements in your associates, rejoice in them as you would in treasure added to the common stock; for every colored individual who cultivates mind or manners, or honestly acquires property, adds very materially to the respectability of the whole class. To disparage character among you who are seeking to rise above the common level by talent, education, skill, enterprise, or industry, is in fact disparaging yourselves as a people; for such characters reflect credit upon the whole of you, and are doing a thousand-fold more to break down prejudice by their example, than can be done by all the arguments in the world. The honorable career they are opening for themselves, will, through their influence, be opened more widely for your children. Every honest and enterprising man, every good scholar, every skilful mechanic among you, is clearing away obstructions in the path of those who shall come after him. Rejoice then, in those of superior cultivation among you. Respect their vir-

tues, and if they have faults, do not seek to magnify them. If there is need to speak of their imperfections, do it with tender reluctance, as you would allude to the errors of a mother or a brother.

To live at service through the whole of life, is probably a more general custom with colored people than with any other class. It is the natural result of their peculiar situation in society, and in itself is by no means disreputable; but some of its effects we deem injurious. Those who are employed in wealthy families, or large establishments, almost unavoidably acquire habits of luxury in eating and drinking, unfavorable to pure health, and altogether unsuited to their limited means of living in a home of their own. It is exceedingly difficult to learn frugality late in life: hence hundreds among you, accustomed to a style of living which requires a large income, go on expending the whole of your earnings from week to week, reserving nothing for the contingencies of sickness, or the infirmities of old age. We earnestly advise you to place a portion of your wages in the Savings Bank from month to month, with the view of purchasing land, or of acquiring some good trade. Few things have a better effect on the moral character of a people than the practice of agriculture; and in no way can the colored people advance their respectability so much as by becoming land-holders. In towns where one or more colored persons own a homestead, we have

generally observed a perceptible diminution of prejudice. There is good reason for this; for the effort to obtain a house and land impels to industry, and of course tends to preserve good morals.

But while we entreat you not to expend your earnings at theatres and other places of idle amusement, in luxurious eating and drinking, or other sensual indulgences, which impair the health of the body and "war against the soul," we would likewise caution you not to let economy degenerate into selfishness and avarice. Property, knowledge, respectability, and every other good gift, are chiefly valuable because they enable us to be useful to others in our day and generation.

The wise consider it a privilege to contribute toward benevolent projects. It is emphatically true that "God loves the cheerful giver." The poor slaves have peculiar claims upon you; and it is highly honorable to you that your sympathies flow forth to them so freely.

Wherever vigilance committees exist, we pray you to aid them liberally, according to your means. The objects of their compassion come among us weary and travel-worn, destitute of clothing, without employment, and generally on their way to a cold climate. Under these circumstances, the donation of articles of warm clothing causes the heart of the pilgrim to leap for joy.

In any of the trying circumstances in which you are liable to be placed, we trust you will never resort to violence, but keep all passionate feelings restrained by a due regard to peace, good order, and the laws of the land. An opposite course of conduct is extremely injurious to the cause of abolition, and is diametrically opposed to the precepts of the gospel.

Perhaps there is no more expressive way of signifying love for your brethren in bonds than by abstaining, as far as possible, from the products of slave labor; particularly from sugar, which occasions the most cruel exactions, and the greatest waste of life. A colored woman, who had been a slave, was asked whether it were not ridiculous to say that slave produce was wetted with the blood of unpaid laborers; she replied, "I can testify to the truth of that, for I have seen the driver flog poor slaves while they were threshing, until the wheat was speckled with blood, like red and white calico."

Many of you have husbands, wives, parents, children, brothers, or sisters in slavery. Let not their blood cry to you in vain. Let not your hard earnings go to increase the wealth of their task-masters, and thus rivet their chains more strongly.

It has doubtless occurred to you that in buying articles from Hayti, you encourage the enterprise of a free colored nation, at the same time that you discourage slavery.

We would affectionately urge upon you the pro-

priety of being scrupulous in the choice of companions. By this, we do not mean to recommend harshness or contempt toward the guilty or imprudent. A spirit of Christian tenderness, that never despises the sinner, but kindly seeks to withdraw him from the error of his ways, best becomes frail, erring mortals; and it is the example of Him who "knew no sin." But while you forgive crime, never seek to excuse it. Do not associate with those who are profligate, immodest, guilty of falsehood, or addicted to slander, whatever may be their gentility of outward appearance. Such habits can be treated with entire disapprobation without ceasing to be kind and polite to all.

Associations for Mental Improvement, Temperance Societies, Moral Reform Societies, and Peace Societies will naturally be suggested to your minds as among the most rapid and effectual means of raising your character as a people. In this way you will learn to respect yourselves and each other; and in proportion as you do this, the proudest will feel compelled to respect you.

Whenever facilities present themselves for uniting with associations of white people, it will undoubtedly be for the benefit of both parties, to improve the opportunity. Such efforts will often be attended with vexations and discouragements; but Christian forbearance and modest dignity under these trials, will be a rebuke none the less deeply felt because it is silent.

Divine Providence is evidently preparing the way for you to be acknowledged as brethren in that great human family where you have so long been servants. Missionary efforts to enlighten the pagan world, the French conquests in Northern Africa, the emancipation of slaves in Southern Africa, the humane policy of the English government toward the Hottentots and Caffres, the European Colonies settled in various parts of that benighted continent, the bright sun of liberty now shining over the British West Indies, the respectable stand which St. Domingo has gained for herself among the nations of the earth, the strong anti-slavery feeling kindled in England and spreading throughout the world, all these indicate that the prophecy is about to be fulfilled, and that Ethiopia will soon stretch forth her hand and rejoice.

At this eventful period, important duties devolve on you. Hosts of ignorant and degraded slaves, about to be invested with the rights and privileges of freemen, will need your judicious advice, your kindly sympathy, your generous assistance, your pure example, your healthy moral influence, and your earnest prayers. May you be prepared to perform faithfully, and well, the high mission to which God is now calling you.

Finally, we would exhort you to remember that religion is the only solid foundation for virtuous habits. Be not seduced into infidel paths. You will

find them cold and dark, dreary and dangerous. In this world of trouble, and toil, and care, we need faith in the blessed promises of the Gospel, and an humble reliance on Divine Providence.

May our Heavenly Father fill your hearts with humble faith in Him, and with love toward all things He has created.

In behalf of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, assembled at Philadelphia.

MARY S. PARKER, *Pres't.*

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